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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000582

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LY, FR, CD
SUBJECT: JEM "FOREIGN SECRETARY" COMMENTS ON ACTIVITIES IN
DARFUR, DEFECTIONS TO JEM, AND RELATIONSHIP WITH CHAD

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Classified By: ACTING POL/ECONOFF KAREN T. LEVINE FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On December 14, the Justice and Equality Movement's "Foreign Secretary" Bushara Suliman Nour, based in Ndjamena, labeled recent JEM military movements in Darfur as "routine" and "strictly within our areas," but later asserted that JEM could easily attack and control all three state capitals in Darfur. JEM has grown stronger in the last week, claimed Nour, as rebel commanders from rival movements defected to JEM the week of December 7. Nour also asserted that JEM's relationship with the Government of Chad (GoC) remains stable, as JEM has a direct relationship with President Deby and balances rival security forces within the GoC. Much of what Nour said repeats other recent comments by JEM representatives, demonstrating the close coordination of JEM's public message. Nour's unabashed reference to continued support from the GoC and potential JEM attacks on the three state capitals are both troubling, but could be grossly over exaggerated and part of JEM's larger propaganda campaign.
END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Khartoum TDY PolOff Eric Barbee met Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) "Foreign Secretary," Bushara Suliman Nour, in Ndjamena on December 14th.

JEM'S MOVEMENTS ARE ROUTINE, BUT READY FOR WAR
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13. (C) Nour opened the meeting stating that the Government of Sudan (GoS) started rumors about JEM's military movements in order for the Sudanese Government to justify its own operations in Darfur. (Note: These comments mirror statements made by JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein to the international press on December 16. End Note.) Poloff responded that UNAMID has also independently reported JEM movements in both North and South Darfur, to which Nour quickly responded, "The GoS has bought off UNAMID and especially its leaders like (UNAMID Joint Special Representative) Adada." (Nour specifically mentioned that Salah Ahmed, a deputy to National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) Chief Salah Gosh, was charged with co-opting senior UNAMID officials.) Although admitting that JEM's military leadership does not inform him about all JEM's operational plans, Nour said that the JEM movements he was aware of "were routine and within our areas of control in

North Darfur." At the close of the meeting (and notably after poloff had put away his pen), Nour returned to the discussion of JEM's military operations and rhetorically asked, "Do you realize that JEM could easily attack and control all three state capitals in Darfur?" He then stated that JEM could immediately stage such an attack if it were not concerned about the "humanitarian impact of such a war." He added that while JEM is not worried about the Sudanese Armed Force, it is concerned about indiscriminate attacks from the janjaweed and Arab militias following JEM's initial military victory throughout Darfur.

NCP PUSHING BASHIR OUT

14. (C) According to Nour, JEM believes that there is a major power struggle within the National Congress Party (NCP), and that senior party leaders are currently searching for an alternative to President Omar Al-Bashir. Nour said that many NCP leaders feel that Bashir must be replaced by another military leader in order to maintain the loyalty of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). According to Nour, the NCP is actively pursuing an unnamed retired military general. (Note: Nour said he had not yet been informed of the specific name of this individual.) Nour said that Vice President Ali Osman Taha and Intelligence Chief Salah Gosh also have their own presidential aspirations and that "JEM knows that either Taha or Gosh would be acceptable to the U.S. and the rest of the West."

DEFLECTIONS TO JEM AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER MOVEMENTS

15. (C) Nour claimed that within the last week several significant commanders had defected from rival movements to

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JEM. Most significantly, former senior military commander for SLM/Minnawi (SLM/MM), Arko Suliman Dahia, joined JEM with 16 vehicles. Nour commented that while he respects Minnawi's bravery, tenacity, and military prowess, Minnawi now lacks support and influence in Darfur. Nour claimed that the only way Minnawi can prevent further defections and build stronger alliances with SLA/Unity is "by buying their loyalty - something that is impossible as Minnawi is suffering financially." Nour said that this defection will not complicate relations with SLM/MM as "Minnawi had lost Arko long ago and it was only a matter of time before Dahia joined another movement."

16. (C) Nour also reported that two SLA/Unity commanders, Sadiq Bura and Salah Jerbo, are also ready to leave Unity and join JEM. Nour said that JEM will accept Bura, but that JEM leaders have not yet decided on Jerbo, as "we all know that Jerbo is one of the rebels that (ICC Prosecutor) Ocampo has on his list." Nour noted that JEM may accept Jerbo, but that if the ICC does issue an indictment for him, "We would immediately and unconditionally turn him over to the ICC." Nour stated that he expects that the units controlled by these two leaders will soon move into JEM controlled areas for further negotiations. According to Nour, senior JEM and SLA/Unity representatives met in October and November in Ndjamena to discuss the possibility of a complete merger between SLA/Unity and JEM. Nour said that seven SLA/Unity representatives (including prominent Unity leaders such as Suliman Jamous and Abubaker Kado) met with Khalil Ibrahim in Ndjamena to discuss this merger, but that SLA/Unity leader Abdallah Yehia declined the offer from the field the first week of December. (Note: Two SLA/Unity representatives, Zubeir Salim and Musa Ahmet Umar, based in Ndjamena confirmed to poloff on December 15 that lengthy discussions between JEM and SLA/Unity did take place in October and November, but that the negotiations failed to deliver an agreement between the two movements. More from these discussions will be reported septel. End Note.)

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT OF CHAD

17. (C) Nour claimed that JEM's relationship with the Government of Sudan remains strong. He acknowledged that the Government of Chad has significantly improved its military and overall defense in 2008, but denied that this would reduce the GoC's need for JEM. Nour claimed that the GoC survives through a delicate balance between rival leaders of Chad's military, intelligence, and extensive paramilitary and security forces, and that the removal of JEM from this equation would throw the whole system into utter chaos. Nour also claimed that the appointment of Dausa Deby as Chad's new Ambassador to Libya, (note: Dausa was often named as the GoC's former point person for JEM) would not affect JEM's relationship with the GoC. "In order to get anything done in Chad," stated Nour, "you must go straight to the top and we will continue to work directly with President Deby." Nour asserted that Dausa Deby's appointment does not indicate the GoC's diminishing support for JEM, but only Chad's desire to send a senior politician to Libya to deal with rising tension along the Chad-Libyan border.

COMMENT

18. (C) Much of what Nour reported repeats recent comments from other JEM leaders and demonstrates the close coordination of JEM's public message. While we are distrustful of much of this, some of his information (i.e. his interpretation of failed negotiations between JEM and SLA/Unity, the power struggle within the NCP, and frequent defections between rebel movements) corresponds closely with other reports. Nour's unabashed reference to continued support from the GoC and potential JEM attacks on the three state capitals are both troubling, but could be grossly over exaggerated and part of JEM's larger propaganda campaign.

BIO NOTE

19. (C) Justice and Equality's Foreign Secretary, Bushara

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Suliman Nour, has been based in Ndjamenia since January 2008. Originally from Tine, Nour reported that he was a relative of SLM/Minawari General Secretary Ali Dausa and classmates with SLM/MM Member of Parliament Ali Traio. Since his arrival in Ndjamenia, Nour stated that he has spent most of his time traveling throughout West Africa representing JEM. He is fluent in English.

110. (U) Tripoli Minimize considered.
NIGRO